

2020

Year In Review

Vatican COVID-19 Commission
Preparing the Future



**DICASTERY FOR PROMOTING
INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

COVID - 19
Vatican Commission

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Taking Steps to Prepare the Future

The COVID-19 pandemic is the defining crisis of this generation, from which we can either emerge for the better or the worse. It has laid bare the inequities and injustices that threaten people's well-being, safety, and lives, and exacerbated an interconnected set of crises – economic, ecological, political, social – that disproportionately impact the poor and most vulnerable.

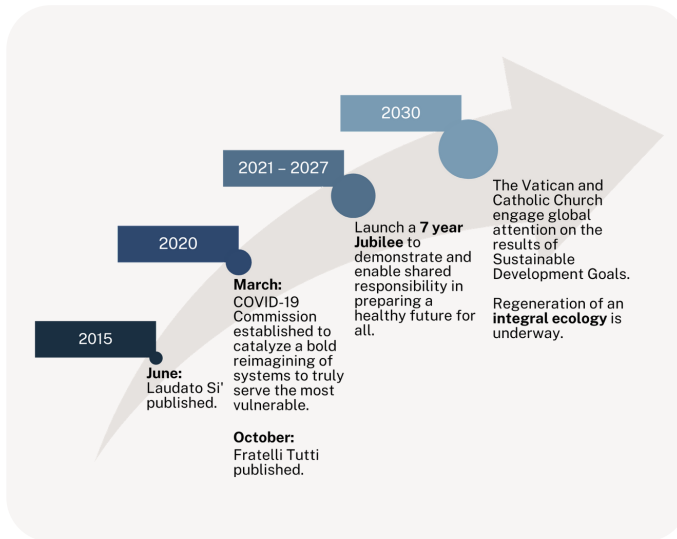
As we move through recovery, we must ensure the cures for the immediate crises are stepping-stones to a more just, inclusive, and integrated set of systems, and that a global, regenerative healing takes place to transform societies and our planet.

In March 2020, Pope Francis established the Vatican COVID-19 Commission as a novel, rapid response to the pandemic. Inspired by the teachings of *Laudato Si'* and *Fratelli Tutti*, the Commission enacts the Pope's call to 'prepare the future' through science, theological reflection, and deep collaboration while prioritizing the least among us. Drawing on a wealth of expertise from local communities, global platforms, and academic experts, the Commission seeks not only to alleviate immediate suffering, but also to usher forth the transformation of hearts, minds, and structures toward a new model of development that prepares a better future for all.

"... the future does have a name, and its name is HOPE. Feeling hopeful does not mean to be optimistically naïve and ignore the tragedy humanity is facing. Hope is the virtue of a heart that doesn't lock itself into darkness, that doesn't dwell on the past, does not simply get by in the present, but is able to see a tomorrow."

Pope Francis, TED Talk April 26, 2017

The Journey to Regeneration



The Commission's work recognizes that all systems and all people are connected, and that only through a culture of encounter and care, collective action and responsibility can we transform our world.

As the world works towards the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, changing people's hearts and minds will be necessary to build a roadmap of recovery that heals both people and the planet. The Commission aims to catalyze collective responsibility and action and equip decision-makers to act on behalf of the common good now and into the future.

Designed for Collaboration

The Commission reports directly to the Holy Father and is housed within the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development under the leadership of Cardinal Peter Turkson. It has five working groups, with leadership drawn across different dicasteries. The collaborative, interdicasterial design draws on individual and collective expertise to achieve what can only be done together, and to encourage a new imagination of the possible.



A timeline for the Commission's work identifies four stages for change:



A set of success measures helps shape and guide the Commission's work. Looking forward, these measures will be tested and refined as needed.

1. Strengthened position of local churches to lead and serve
2. Coordinated messages and calls to action to enable decisions and mobilize action
3. Multi-year church commitments launched with resource and strategy plan
4. Internal collaboration and coordination strengthened with new ways of working

2020 In Review

- Deepened dialogue and connection with local churches and global Catholic networks
- Developed expert, integral set of analysis, guidance and relationships that promote new, creative paths forward for healthy people and planet
- Enhanced collaboration across dicasteries and with external partners via diplomatic and social change channels
- Further illuminated the good works taken by the church to prepare the future
- Increased funding for essential needs and mobilized resources
- Co-created and published 20-Point Plan on vaccine equity

The report that follows presents a broad overview of the result of the Commission's work over the past year.



Listening and Responding to Local Leadership

Working Group 1 engages in dialogue with local churches to better understand the needs on the ground so the Commission can provide support to local leadership in a way that best fits local needs.



WORKING GROUP 1

Coordinators:

Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development and Caritas Internationalis

Key Partners:

Local Caritas Networks, Charitable initiatives of other Dicasteries of the Roman Curia, e.g., Office of Papal Charities, the Pontifical Mission Societies and the Vatican Pharmacy

RESULTS

- 200+ reports from local voices – hearing from nuncios, episcopal conferences and countries, dioceses, and religious congregations
- Established comprehensive database of testimonies and good practices
- Developed mechanisms for continual dialogue with local voices
- Formed COVID-19 joint Dicastery-Caritas Internationalis (CI) Commission that supported 40+ projects and mobilized 4M€. Additional CI-supported projects totaled 18M€, reaching more than 17.3 million people through Dicastery and CI activities combined
- Delivered life-saving supplies and virus-prevention information to the most vulnerable, including internally displaced people and migrants
- Strengthened interfaith relations through dialogue and cooperation

Listening to local communities and engaging them in dialogue is at the heart of the Commission's work. Working Group 1 began by establishing multiple and inclusive channels for sustained dialogue with local church structures, including national and regional Episcopal Conferences, Catholic medical associations, religious congregations, health pastoral care, and apostolic nunciatures. Virtual meetings with local church structures were held around the world and surveys were conducted to assess existing medical and health infrastructure, and to identify the most urgent challenges and best practices. Weekly conversations were held with Episcopal Conferences in Canada, Greece, India, Iraq, Philippines, Venezuela and many others, which helped the Commission adapt and rapidly respond to changing situations on the ground.

Key challenges identified in 2020:

- Food insecurity and unequal access to social protection
- Underequipped health systems and unequal access to health care
- Absence of spiritual assistance in hospitals and prisons
- Deterioration of mental health; addiction, domestic violence, and suicide on the rise
- Increase in poverty and unemployment
- Reduced educational and social development opportunities for children
- Deteriorated trust in government structures
- Increased vulnerability among marginalized groups (e.g., migrants and refugees, indigenous populations)

While local initiatives and “good practices” are mitigating the pandemic:

- Local churches are actively combatting misinformation while spreading accurate information about the virus and how to mitigate its impact
- Church infrastructures and facilities are being repurposed for quarantined populations and as COVID-19 treatment centers
- Chaplains are providing spiritual support to health workers, patients, and families and trained to monitor communities and assist in treatment
- Personal protective gear is being produced locally, and local and national radio and television are launching awareness campaigns and remote learning initiatives
- Pastoral and health workers are being trained in how to prevent and manage the virus
- Churches are engaged in political advocacy vis-à-vis national governments in favor of legislation to enhance nutrition, housing, and income support

Working Group 1 also worked to provide humanitarian aid to those most in need. COVID-19 prevention and preparedness programs were funded in Argentina, Dominican Republic, Ghana, Iran, Iraq, Nigeria, and Yemen. Projects aimed at guaranteeing food supply, providing personal protective equipment, offering psychological and spiritual support, and repurposing Catholic facilities to embrace COVID-19 patients.



Co-Creating Integral, Creative Solutions

Working Group 2 brings together a diverse set of expertise to assess and analyze systemic challenges and to propose creative, integral solutions with discrete calls to action. The goal is to equip regional and global decision-makers to transform systems toward a more sustainable, inclusive, and resilient future.



WORKING GROUP 2

Coordinator:

Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development

Key Partners:

Universities and scholars, private and public sector representatives, and social movements

RESULTS

- Brought together 50+ organizational partners, and more than 75 individual contributors to complete over 150 analysis papers
- Formulated specific action plans to support 4 core impact themes
- Developed and shared dozens of summaries, newsletters, podcasts for distribution to local churches
- Created the African Regional Consultative group, assembled a subgroup on health, conducted four webinars, produced multiple research papers
- Mobilized regional groups and resources based in Latin America and Asia

The task force model is the backbone of Working Group 2, providing academic and theological analysis to support the design of new systems and build robust, long-term external relationships. Four task forces were established that focus on *health, economy, ecology, and security* and work to draw linkages between typically siloed systems. Over time, task forces began to emerge at the regional level.

The goal of the task forces is to bring diverse expertise to the table – representing both faith and science – to generate reflections, analysis, and creative recommendations, rooted in the gospel. These recommendations are then used to equip decision-makers in regenerating systems and structures for the common good.

During the early stages of the Commission, a diverse group of over 50 partners produced weekly investigations about the most urgent dimensions of the pandemic. Over 150 papers were submitted, covering multiple dimensions of integral human development. From these analyses, **four broad impact themes** were distilled that now orient the work of the task forces:

1. Dignity in work and jobs of the future, today
2. From one to many, new structures for the common good
3. Governance, peace, and security, at the heart of global solidarity
4. Rebalancing social systems with nature, in the wake of COVID-19

From Analysis to Action

By the end of 2020, over 30 projects were in development. The task forces work in collaboration with partners and each other to ensure that their efforts represent holistic proposals. The following are a few of the projects underway that collectively begin to shape new economic, political, and social models for integral human development.

Food Security. There is enough food to feed the world, yet millions of people still go to bed hungry. This initiative is championed by the Security, Ecology and Economy Task Forces to contribute to the global discussion initiated by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization. It brings together the Nobel Prize-winning World Food Programme; CIDSE, an international family of Catholic social justice organizations; the Economy of Francesco movement and others to propose a new agricultural development model that puts the poor and most vulnerable at the center.

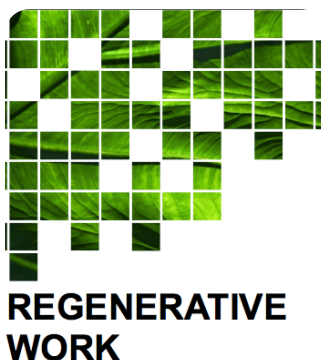
Future of Work. Businesses are closing; job loss and insecurity are on the rise. A series of global webinars organized by the Economy Task Force in conjunction with Georgetown University, the International Labour Organization, the Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose at the University College of London, World Resources Institute, and Deloitte looked at international labour markets prior to and during the pandemic and proposed concrete ways to correct injustices in the world of work.

Laudato Si' Business Roundtables. How do you build a regenerative economy that is inclusive and sustainable? This initiative of the Economy Task Force, coordinated with NOW Partners, brought together globally recognized business, academic, and community leaders to discuss steps to reform the global economy in the post-COVID era, guided by *Laudato Si'*.

Vaccine for All: 20 points for a fairer and healthier world. A threat anywhere is a threat everywhere. This initiative looks at equity across the full spectrum of vaccine development and deployment, with a particular focus on awareness-building to foster trust in vaccines against the COVID-19 virus. In collaboration with the Pontifical Academy for Life, the Commission publicly released a 20-point action plan for a fairer and healthier world as it relates to vaccine equity.

Biodiversity & Water (WASH). There is no future without nature. This is an inter-task Force project involving FaithInvest and World Wide Fund for Nature to prepare a Christian narrative on biodiversity that is scriptural, cosmic, ecological, scientific, creative, and ritualized.

Less Arms, More Health. In the midst of the pandemic, many national budgets for weapons of mass destruction have increased, but peace can't be built on an empty stomach. Following the call of Pope Francis in *Fratelli Tutti* to create an international fund with the money previously invested in weapons, this multilateral effort aims to negotiate agreements between states to invest not in weapons, but in true security – peacebuilding efforts, poverty reduction, and healthcare – towards integral human development.



NOW Partners
For the Vatican's Dicastery of Integral Human Development

NOW
PARTNERS





Shining a Light on Good Works

Working Group 3 brings professional communications expertise and Vatican's media infrastructure to the promotion of analyses and messages prepared by the Commission in order to inform the Holy Father, the global Church, and the world.



WORKING GROUP 3

Coordinators: Dicastery for Communications and Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development


Key Partners: Commission Working Groups

RESULTS

- Global audiences regularly informed about the evolution of the pandemic, the Commission's activities, and personal testimonies of people affected by the pandemic through daily and weekly press reviews
- 3 books published by Libreria Editrice Vaticana: *To Heal the World: Catechesis on the Pandemic*, *Life After the Pandemic* and *Strong in the Face of Tribulation* in five languages and e-book *Click to Pray: Crisis & Health*
- Announcing and disseminating Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* and ongoing *Laudato Si'* messaging
- 1,000s of media outputs in 36 languages
- Papal messages on crisis and healing; proposed actions on nuclear disarmament
- Multiple podcasts, newsletters, interviews, press conferences

Throughout 2020, Working Group 3 informed global audiences about the evolution of the pandemic through daily and weekly press briefings, disseminated the Commission's activities and messages through news publications, press conferences, and communicated personal testimonies of people affected by the pandemic. Weekly press reviews were shared with the five working groups to keep them informed about the latest developments of the pandemic and the initiatives underway.



L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO
 L'Osservatore Romano

Uniting Faith and Science for Global Healing

Launched in October 2020, the **Crisis & Health eRosary** embodies Pope Francis's invitation to pray for the victims of the pandemic by highlighting real testimonies from people affected by COVID-19 and linking them with the contemplation of the mysteries of the Rosary.

The collage features several key elements:

- Top Left:** Book cover for "To heal the world: Catechesis on the pandemic" by Peter Kodwo Appiah Turkson, published by Libreria Editrice Vaticana.
- Top Center-Left:** Book cover for "Fratelli Tutti" by Pope Francis, published by Libreria Editrice Vaticana.
- Top Center-Right:** Book cover for "Crisis & Health Rosary eBook" by the Vatican Rosary Commission, published by Libreria Editrice Vaticana.
- Top Right:** Book cover for "FORTI NELLA TRIBOLAZIONE" (Strong in Tribulation) by Pope Francis, published by Libreria Editrice Vaticana.
- Far Right:** Book cover for "LIFE AFTER THE PANDEMIC" by Cardinal Michael Curry, SJ, published by Libreria Editrice Vaticana.
- Bottom Left:** A large photograph of Pope Francis in white vestments, blessing a crowd of people with his hands raised. Some people in the crowd are wearing face masks.
- Bottom Center:** A laptop displaying the website "fratellitutti.va". The website features the "Fratelli Tutti" book cover and text about the "Fratelli Tutti" Rosary Commission.
- Bottom Right:** A photograph of a man in a blue shirt and face mask holding a young child. The child is also wearing a face mask.



Supporting Diplomacy & Global Relations

Working Group 4, as part of the Secretariat of State, brings the experience of the Holy See in its activities and relations with States and Intergovernmental Organizations and carries out its daily activity as an interlocutor, including through communicating the fruits of the research, dialogue, initiatives, and reflections produced by the Commission.



WORKING GROUP 4

Coordinators:

Section for Relations with States of the Secretariat of State and
Migrants and Refugees Section of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral
Human Development

RESULTS

- Weekly country-level reports on the status of COVID-19 and its impacts
- Reports and reflections prepared on specific topics, including, among others, debt, work, sanctions and migration

When the Commission was created, the Section for Relations with States proposed a plan for how Working Group 4 would contribute to the goal of preparing the future. It would provide feedback on the analyses and executive summaries produced by Working Group 2 and suggest modifications in light of Catholic Social Doctrine and the teachings of the Holy Father.

The group produced weekly reports on the evolution of the pandemic and its consequences across six regions: Sub-Saharan Africa, America, Asia, Europe, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and Oceania. These reports were shared with the other Working Groups and greatly contributed to the adaptation of the Commission's general strategy to the constantly changing global reality.

The information and insights provided by Working Group 4 were crucial to adapting the Commission's messages to local contexts and initiating bottom-up processes of change. In addition to the weekly reports, Working Group 4 regularly compiled and published all of the

COVID-19 related interventions by Permanent Representatives of the Holy See, which seek to spread the Holy Father's messages regarding the multiple consequences of the crisis and the necessary preparation of the future in various international and multilateral fora.

Working Group 4 also contributed timely and useful material about the pandemic, which served as helpful tools for the Secretariat of State in its role of serving the Holy Father.

Pope Francis participated in several high-level political fora throughout 2020, including his speech during the General Debate at the 75th Session of the UN General Assembly, in which he reaffirmed the need for global solidarity and a strengthened multilateralism to confront the COVID-19 pandemic as a united human family, with special care for the most vulnerable. He reiterated his commitment to making use of the current crisis as an opportunity to promote peace, social friendship before world leaders, and a change of mind and heart.

Pope Francis also participated in the TED Countdown event that took place in October 2020. High Representatives of the Section for Relations with States participated in several of the regional meetings of the World Economic Forum, which were good opportunities to reiterate the relevant principles of Catholic Social Doctrine to other participants.





Building a Pipeline of Resources

Working Group 5 plays a critical role in building relationships and resource streams to financially support the Commission's work and its assistance to local churches.



WORKING GROUP 5

Coordinator:

Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development

RESULTS

- Refurbished the Fondazione Buon Samaritano to fund the Commission
- Raised +7 million EUR and +1 million USD.
- Secured 2.4 million EUR for grants and donations to local churches.

To facilitate fundraising, Working Group 5 refurbished the preexisting Buon Samaritano Foundation to receive donations and support the work of the Commission. Between April 1 and September 30, more than over 7 million EUR and 1 million USD had been raised or committed.



The Journey Ahead

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted every aspect of people's lives. It has also presented an opportunity to reshape societies in lasting ways. The road to recovery will require guaranteeing vaccines for all, food for all and jobs for all. New health, agricultural and economic models will be needed to prepare a future where we care for all brothers and sisters and for the planet. The experiences of the past year have also highlighted other key issues to consider:

- The vaccine must not be seen as a panacea that will end the crisis. While the vaccine may offer protection against the virus, it will not “cure” longstanding social ills, including inequality, and the virus of indifference.
- Major concerns around vaccine availability, accessibility, and affordability remain. The Commission’s focus on ensuring the least among us are not left behind will require unwavering focus and commitment and strong international cooperation.
- Migrants and the displaced require additional attention. Living in overcrowded conditions with poor sanitary conditions, and lacking access to formal employment, health care, and other social protection systems, migrants and displaced populations are among the most vulnerable and hardest hit by the pandemic.
- Disseminating factual information is not enough. Ideological obstacles, misinformation, falsehoods, and “fake news” are serious threats to recovery. Ongoing communication and dialogue with communities will be critical to changing attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors.
- COVID-19 has not only affected the way people relate to one another but it has fractured relations within and between States, which will have an impact on long-term recovery. It will be necessary to invest in, rebuild and renew trust in relationships at all levels.



"Discerning the path of healing and recovery through this pandemic is certainly not a thing for 'lone rangers'. It is a global venture that does not admit individualism, whether it is personal or collective, whether it is expressed in the form of political nationalisms or economic vested interests...The way to exit from the crisis as better human beings, living in healthier societies is a common venture."

**Cardinal Peter Kodwo Turkson,
Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Development**



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